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ABSTRACT

Some historical developments concerning public higher education, the fiscal outlook, and enrollment trends are considered. Although historically state-supported universities were autonomous, the decade following World War II brought greater state involvement. Increasingly, political rather than educational considerations governed decisions regarding the division of monies among the universities and colleges. Most states have established a single agency to coordinate and plan postsecondary education. Boards were given authority to recommend the establishment of new institutions, the expansion of existing ones, and other functions. The fiscal situation is a major concern for the future. The impact of inflation and a stable income or a decreased rate of increase of that income has had quality and programmatic effects, and has affected the expectations and morale of citizens. Declining enrollment trends will mean extreme competition for traditional students and expanded educational offerings to other age groups: adults, inmates, shut-ins, and others. It is advocated that caution be exercised to avoid further deterioration of academic standards. It is projected that because of educational, economic, and political necessities central coordinating boards may appear ineffective advocates from the universities' standpoint, and as ineffective managers from the legislative standpoint. It is suggested that it is important to the welfare of higher education that governing boards survive. (SW)

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NEW ASSUMPTIONS FOR STATE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE

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NEW ASSUMPTIONS FOR STATE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE

For most of their history, state supported universities were autonomous. In their external political relations, for example, they dealt directly with the legislature. Presidents urged adoption of requests for funds to sympathetic legislators. The resulting appropriations determined policy, the location and size of a building, the inauguration or expansion of academic programs, and the competitive relationship of each institution both within and without the state. The affairs of state government were relatively few. Legislatures met infrequently, budgets were small, and decisions, although significant, were relatively easy to make. Alternatives were clear and choices were few.

In the decade following World War II, the web became more complex. The state assured a larger role in our daily lives as the span of its concerns widened. Increasingly, government regulated, subsidized, controlled, policed and concerned itself with the welfare of its citizens. It assumed responsibility for the aged, the indigent, the physically and mentally ill. Populations grew exponentially. The clamor for free or low cost quality education was extended downward to kindergarten and upward through graduate school. Our society increasingly depended upon a technological base which demanded a high level of education and extensive research capabilities. Universities expanded and multiplied. Teacher colleges became universities. Graduate program proliferated.

As state budgets became larger in response to new and more substantial demands, the old ways of determining the allocation of money were rendered outmoded and inadequate. State legislatures sought improved ways of conceptualizing and addressing the increasingly controversial questions with which they were confronted. They sought to deal broadly with the questions of allocation of additional support among categories such as mental health, roads, and education. Within the latter category, the proper balance between funding of kindergarten, education for the handicapped, and graduate and research programs became the focus of decisions. No longer could the legislature deal with the welter of conflicting data and frequently inconsistent claims presented by a larger number of individual and ambitious universities. The division of money between

universities became buried in larger questions. Increasingly, political rather than educational considerations governed hasty and often uninformed decisions with respect to the division of monies among the plethora of university petitioners. Planning to accommodate the future was uncoordinated, parochial, or non-existent.

The response of the states was to lodge responsibility for the planning and coordination of universities in a single agency. The legislature was thereby enabled to deal with the broader conceptual questions as to the division of resources between public education and higher education and allocate the proper percentage of the state revenue to each of these functions according to its judgment. Boards were given authority to recommend the establishment of new institutions, the expansion of existing ones, and to plan for the distribution of students and programs among the institutions as well as the location and size of facilities to house them. The outcome of the struggle between those who feared encroachment by such boards upon traditional institutional autonomy and those who believed in the necessity for such unification resulted in state boards which vary in terms of the duties and responsibilities allocated to them. Such boards range from coordinating bodies possessing recommending authority only to a single governing board controlling a consolidated budget for all publicly supported universities. Since mid 1950, however, the trend has been clear and unmistakable. States without such central authorities established them--those with central boards strengthened their powers. At the present time, forty-seven states have central boards as contrasted with seventeen in 1954.

On the whole, such boards have performed well under difficult circumstances. Much was expected and much was demanded of them. For a number of reasons, many of them failed to live up to those expectations. That they failed to meet these high expectations and the extraordinary demands does not indict them. The comment that they, on the whole, performed satisfactory in the light of reasonable expectations and the political situation in which found themselves remains, in my opinion, a valid judgment.

And what of the future?

I foresee a number of factors in the next ten years which will present problems requiring consummate wisdom and judgment. The handling of these issues will determine whether such boards continue with expanded responsibilities or whether fragmentation of our higher education structure occurs. Those major forces impacting operations can be grouped under two large subject matter areas although they overlap and affect each other. The first of these is the

straitened fiscal outlook. The second is the prospective rapid decrease in the size of the traditional college bound student pool. Time will permit me to deal with these only in rough outline. I raise them in order that you may consider and refine them.

Fiscal Situation

From 1950 to the mid 1960s, the real income of universities increased rapidly and dramatically. You are familiar with the figures in the Carnegie Commission study which have indicated that expenditures of universities grew at a rate more rapid than the growth of the gross national product. The unit cost of instruction increased. Large annual increments of manpower and funds were dedicated to research. Teaching loads were lowered. The average professor became a manager with large sums of money at his disposal. For hard scientists, equipment increased and was refined. Accellerators blossomed. Electron microscopes became common. Beginning in the late 1960s, the story line changed. Federal and state funds flowing into education either did not grow or grew at a decreasing rate. Real dollars per faculty member and per student decreased during the early 1970s. In 1974, inflation added to the burdens and the sense of frustration which this situation created. The scenario became one of doing more or the same with less. The real income of our faculty began to decrease. The impact of this twin devil of inflation and a stable income or a decreased rate of increase of that income has had qualitative and programmatic effects. More importantly, it has had severe impact upon the expectations and morale of a generation which had been raised to believe the revolution of rising expectations was a standard part of its cultural pattern.

For a confluence of reasons, higher education is competing less and less successfully for the state and federal dollars. Priorities have been rearranged and the period of affluence for higher education has passed at least temporarily. I leave to each of you a judgment as to whether those priorities can again be reordered so that higher education receives a higher percentage of the revenues of state and federal governments. I am not optimistic for the near term.

Students

By now the curve which shows a future drop in the number of the traditional college age student is sufficiently familiar so we know the figures did not occur in a nightmare. It is based upon hard figures of individuals now

living. The facts are incontrovertible. The decline will be as steep as was the incline. We are witnessing the beginnings of extreme competition for traditional students. Many of these competitive steps impacted upon previously sacrosanct and hallowed traditions. Our grading system has eroded until the grade curve is a national scandal. We give credit by examination. We admit at the junior year of high school. We press for increased financial aid for students.

Competition for the traditional student is being followed by an attempt to expand education to other age groups. The buzz words are career readjustment, upgrading, and lifelong learning. We install academic programs in prisons. We broadcast television and radio courses to shut-ins and housewives. We cooperate with newspapers to offer courses for credit.

Colleges will increasingly compete for these new students as well as for traditional students. Many seem to be attempting to outdo each other in designing courses to appeal to newly discovered groups. Ignored is the long history of continuing education, the failure of our GENESYS and similar programs, the fact that education should be demanding work. Our attempts to increase access should continue. Claims that major new sources of students can replace the losses visualized through a decrease in the size of the traditional group are unrealistic in my opinion. Caution must be exercised to avoid further deterioration of standards. Opportunity should not be confused with guaranteed success.

On one hand, universities excuse students from traditional work and on the other, they seek to augment an artificial demand for college work through licensing and certification requirements. At the present time, we hear only a faint stirring in this direction. In the future, we will see a demand for increased initial educational requirements for licenses and certificates and continuing education requirements for their renewal.

The decrease in the number of students likely to occur in the late 1970s and 1980s and the confusion arising from the competition for students will raise new and grave questions. For example, increased funding has been geared in part to increases in the number of students. Economies of scale enabled universities to utilize only a portion of the additional money appropriated to support new students and to utilize the rest for experimentation, innovation and advanced research. The decrease in the number of students will aggravate the economic situation caused by the probability that higher education's share of the state and federal dollars will remain stable or even decrease. The

past annual infusion of new funds which enabled improvement in the quality and inauguration of new programs cannot be taken for granted in the future. The advent of unions will render even more rigid flexibility which we already regard as limited. The potential for a change in our collegial style of governance is on the horizon. The unwillingness of a governing body to interfere in the internal operation of universities will render it difficult for central boards to moderate the new competition for students.

In these circumstances, central governing bodies will become increasingly vulnerable and seemingly ineffective. They were established to make the educational decisions previously made by the legislature and to plan for orderly growth to assure wise allocation and use of resources. It was their ability to provide additional funds which rendered their restrictive actions acceptable to universities accustomed to autonomy. It was their judicious use of resources which rendered them acceptable to the legislature. Wise management of resources with shrinking budgets will be more difficult although more imperative. Wise management may call for decisions not palatable to individual institutions nor to their local constituencies. Legislators, since they are politicians and since their power derives from local constituencies, can easily differ as to the definition of the wise and judicious distribution of limited funds. The legislature may well demand and expect adjustment in programs and adjustment in personnel policies which will be repugnant to the universities.

As has been the case in the past, boards will be tagged by universities as the supporters and originators of legislative actions which they must implement. Therefore, from the universities' standpoint, boards may well appear ineffective advocates and from the legislative standpoint, ineffective managers. Thus, central boards will have an ever more difficult task to preserve their autonomy and to protect higher education while responding to the education, economic and political necessities of the day. Their success in the past augurs well for their ability to adjust to the abrasiveness of the future. It is important to the welfare of higher education that they do so and, in that adjustment, maintain the confidence of both the universities and the legislature.